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Oversight Committee to Examine Restroom Gender Equality in Federal Buildings

WASHINGTON – Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) today announced that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will hold a legislative hearing on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 to examine the merits of H.R. 4869, the “Restroom Gender Parity in Federal Buildings Act.” The hearing will take place at 10:00 a.m. in room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building.

Chairman Towns introduced the bill, also known as the “Potty Parity Act,” to address the problem of insufficient restroom facilities for women in federal buildings. The bipartisan measure, cosponsored by Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Reps. Pete Visclosky (D-IN) and Yvette Clarke (D-NY), would require any federal building constructed for public use to have a 1 to 1 ratio for toilets, including urinals, in women’s and men’s restrooms. The bill would also impact future federal projects by mandating that preference for federal leasing considerations be given to buildings that meet this criterion.

Due to biological and social distinctions, women often need to allow for more time than men in restrooms, and limited restrooms impose undue hardship on women, especially those who are pregnant or suffer from other medical conditions. When the restroom accommodations are unequal or inadequate, this issue is especially problematic for women in careers, where they are underrepresented, like law enforcement or construction. In the worst cases, some have suffered work-related problems and terminations as a result of such controversies.

Chairman Towns introduced a similar measure in the 110th Congress after expressing concern that “exasperating lines” and overall restroom accommodations for women were “an inconvenience seen in almost every type of public building.” The Restroom Gender Parity in Federal Buildings Act sets a strict standard in its revision of federal building codes with regard to the accessibility of restroom accommodations for men and women.

Witnesses list to follow:

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